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ARNOSHT KOLMAN: VETERAN COMMUNIST RECANTS

ANNCR:

ARNOSHT KOLMAN, A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY FOR FIFTY EIGHT YEARS, RECENTLY ARRIVED ON A VISIT IN SWEDEN AND DECIDED TO REMAIN IN THE WEST. THE EIGHTY-EIGHT YEAR-OLD MISTER KOLMAN RETURNED HIS PARTY CARD TO SOVIET LEADER LEONID BREZHNEV AND EXPLAINED HIS ACTION IN AN OPEN LETTER REPRINTED IN THE AMERICAN PRESS....AS WE HEAR NOW FROM VOA'S JULIAN GORSKI:

VOICE:

MISTER KOLMAN MADE CLEAR IN HIS LETTER THAT HE BASED HIS DECISION ON DISILLUSIONMENT WITH COMMUNISM AS IT IS PRACTICED NOW -- AND NOT WITH ANY HUMANISTIC IDEALS OF SOCIALISM THAT HE HAD HOPED WOULD BE INTRODUCED IN THE SOVIET UNION. MISTER KOLMAN WAS BORN IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE NINETEEN SIXTY EIGHT INVASION OF THAT COUNTRY BY SOVIET-LED FORCES BROUGHT ABOUT HIS BREAK WITH COMMUNISM. AS HE EXPLAINS IN HIS OPEN LETTER TO GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV: "NINETEEN SIXTY EIGHT WAS THE REAL TURNING POINT FOR ME, WHEN I HAD THE OCCASION TO OBSERVE THE PRAGUE SPRING AND SEE WITH MY OWN EYES" THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE FOR ALEXANDER DUBCEK'S EXPERIMENT OF "SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE." BUT, MISTER KOLMAN ADDS, WHEN SOVIET TANKS AND ARMIES OCCUPIED CZECHOSLOVAKIA "I LOST ANY ILLUSIONS."

IN STOCKHOLM, THE VETERAN SOVIET COMMUNIST TOLD THE VOICE OF AMERICA: "I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE SOVIET LEADERS OCCUPIED CZECHOSLOVAKIA BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID THAT THE SOVIET PEOPLE WOULD" -- IN HIS WORDS: "BECOME INFECTED AND WOULD ALSO DEMAND HUMAN RIGHTS."

MISTER KOLMAN HAD A TURBULENT CAREER. CAPTURED BY RUSSIAN TROOPS IN WORLD WAR ONE, HE WAS INTERNED IN A CZARIST PRISONER OF WAR CAMP. DURING THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION HE JOINED THE FLEDGLING RED ARMY AND FOUGHT ON FOUR FRONTS. MISTER KOLMAN RECOUNTS THESE AND OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HIS LETTER TO CHAIRMAN BREZHNEV. HE RECALLS IMPRISONMENT IN GERMANY FOR ILLEGAL COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN THE NINETEEN TWENTIES; HIS WORK ON THE POLITICAL COMMAND OF THE SOVIET ARMY IN WORLD WAR TWO; THE DEATH OF HIS SISTER IN A NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP... AND THE EXECUTION OF HIS BROTHER ON STALIN'S ORDERS. HE ALSO LOOKS BACK ON HIS THREE YEARS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN MOSCOW'S LUBYANKA PRISON, AND THE DEPORTATION OF HIS WIFE AND THEN-SMALL DAUGHTER TO SIBERIA.

BUT ALL THESE ADVERSITIES DIDN'T SWAY MISTER KOLMAN INTO RENOUNCING COMMUNISM.

HE WROTE SECRETARY GENERAL BREZHNEV THAT HIS FIRST POLITICAL WAVERING CAME WHEN THEN SOVIET PARTY CHIEF KHRUSHCHEV DENOUNCED STALIN'S PERSONALITY CULT AND DETAILED STALIN'S CRIMES.

MISTER KOLMAN DOES NOT DENY THE SUCCESSES ACHIEVED BY THE SOVIET UNION IN ENDING ILLITERACY, IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND IN SECURING A BETTER LIVING STANDARD FOR A CONSIDERABLE SECTION OF THE POPULATION. "BUT MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE," HE OBSERVES. "A HUMAN BEING MUST BE ABLE TO SAY ALOUD WHAT HE THINKS, WRITE DOWN WHAT HE THINKS, READ WHAT HIS FANCY TAKES HIM TO, CHOOSE HIS PLACES OF ABODE FREELY AND GO WHEREVER HE WANTS TO GO."

ARNOSHT KOLMAN IS NOW IN SWEDEN.

"I AM HAPPY," HE TELLS HIS INTERVIEWER, THAT "I CAN SPEND THE LAST YEARS OF MY LIFE" HERE.